



MAY 14 1971

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Commissioner Ramey
Commissioner Johnson
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LASER CLASSIFICATION PANEL

This will supplement my memorandum to the Commission dated April 23, 1971,* which enclosed copies of the replies we had received to that time on the subject of the Laser Panel's preliminary response to the Commission dated February 5, 1971.**

Enclosed herewith for the information of the Commission are replies we have just received from Dr. Michael M. May, Director, Lawrence Radiation Laboratory, and Dr. Carl Walske, of the Department of Defense. Dr. Walske states that although Dr. Foster has not read his letter of reply, since he is presently in Europe, the subject has been discussed at some length with him and Dr. Foster is in general agreement with the views expressed by Dr. Walske in his letter.

The Panel, at its meeting on May 21, will be most anxious to learn of the Commission's reactions to the Panel's preliminary response to the Commission on the subject of laser classification policy, as well as the Commission reaction to the comments that have been received from those who were furnished copies of the Panel's letter to the Commission dated February 5, 1971. It seems likely that they will be particularly interested in the Commission's reaction to Dr. Walske's letter since it seems to be the expression not only of his views but those of Dr. Foster as well.

The Commission will have noted that the replies that have been received take two general approaches, one, that of acceptance of the Panel's preliminary position, and the other (expressed in the letters from Livermore, Los Alamos, and the Department of Defense), that of pointing out the dangers of accepting the Panel's preliminary view. With the exception of Mr. Henderson, no written replies have yet been received

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from the other members of the Committee of Senior Reviewers. The other members have orally expressed a view which is in consonance with those of the two weapons laboratories and of the Department of Defense.

As the Commission has noted on earlier occasions, stringent classification of research work in the application of lasers to the production of electrical power and to other civilian uses could, if continued in effect for a long period of time, create a very difficult administrative and political problem. A change in classification policy along the lines suggested in the Laser Classification Panel's preliminary reply would alleviate these problems for some time to come. Such a change in policy would, for example, remove classification from much of the work being performed by KMS and some of the work they are proposing to do. It would also remove the restraints that are now being experienced by Dr. Lubin at the University of Rochester, and would permit declassification of most, if not all, of the work that has so far been done in this area by our weapons laboratories.

The effects of this change in classification policy on the national defense and security are described in the letter from Dr. Walske and in the letters from the Los Alamos and Livermore Laboratories. The issue is clearly whether the Commission feels that this type and amount of weapons information can now be published without adversely affecting the national defense and security. Dr. Walske's view, and presumably that of Dr. Poster, is that the Panel's preliminary suggestion goes farther than is prudent at present but his letter has not suggested an alternative position.

The laser classification policy now in effect has not as yet presented any unmanageable problems. KMS seems to be content to operate under the provisions of their no-fund contract with the Commission and Dr. Lubin has not so far expressed any severe opposition to the current classification rules although he has said that it has curtailed to some extent the work which he would like to undertake.

Gulf Energy and Environmental Systems, Inc., which, as the Commission is aware, had expressed some interest in entering the field of laser-thermonuclear energy work, informed us informally at a meeting held in their office on May 6, that they do not now plan to invest company money in this field of research but that they would probably be coming to the Commission at some later time with proposals for Commission-supported research.

The courses of action that appear to be open at present are (1) to encourage the Laser Classification Panel to strengthen the position they describe in Dr. Seitz's letter to the Commission of February 5, 1971, or (2) to inform the Panel that the Commission is inclined to

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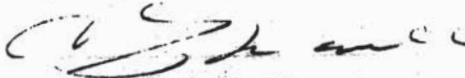
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place great weight on the dangers of adopting a position such as that described in the Panel's February 5 letter and to ask the Panel to reassess their view in the light of all of the comments that have been received.



C. L. Marshall, Director
Division of Classification

Enclosures:

1. Ltr fm Michael M. May, LRL, to
C. L. Marshall, dtd 5/3/71 (SRD-1)
2. Ltr fm Carl Walske, DOD, to C. L.
Marshall, dtd 5/7/71 (SRD-1)

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LAWRENCE RADIATION LABORATORY
P.O. BOX 808
LIVERMORE, CALIFORNIA 94550

May 3, 1971
Document #BY 71-7

Mr. C. L. Marshall, Director
Division of Classification
U. S. Atomic Energy Commission
Washington, D. C. 20545

Reference: Letter, C. L. Marshall to M. May dated 2/12/71

Dear Mr. Marshall:

We at LRL have read with interest Dr. Seitz's letter summarizing his Panel's interim response and views. As you and the Panel are aware, there is a wide diversity of opinion here, as elsewhere, concerning what the classification of laser-fusion technology should be. The AEC and the Panel have repeatedly been exposed to this diversity of opinion and hence it will not be dwelt on in this letter. We can note one area of considerable agreement. There seems to be reasonable concurrence at LRL with the Panel's view concerning the classification of lasers and laser work itself, as distinct from the pellets and implosion techniques.

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Mr. C. L. Marshall
May 3, 1971

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None of this is to argue that the time has not come when a controlled release of much of this technology might not work more to the country's interests than does keeping it classified. Declassification is indeed likely to spur as much or more work within the U.S. as abroad. Perhaps the Seitz Panel should be further asked to consider this question as a whole, and to formulate recommendations concerning all areas where declassification of data and techniques, while of some value for weapons programs, could substantially help the country's efforts in other fields.

Sincerely,

Michael M. May

Michael M. May
Director
LRL, Livermore

Distribution:

- Copy 1,2A - C. L. Marshall
- 3A - H. M. Agnew
- 4A - J. A. Hornbeck

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